

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Status of the Application

Prior to the entry of this amendment, claims 1-31 were pending in this application. The Office Action rejected claims 1-8, 10-23 and 25-31 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. 6,200,444 to Ahlers *et al.* (“Ahlers”) and found that claims 9 and 24 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the applicable base claim and any intervening claims.

The present amendment amends claims 1, 11-13, 15, 17, 21 and 26 and cancels claims 8-10, 24 and 25. Therefore, claims 1-7, 11-23 and 26-31 are presented for examination in this amendment. No new matter is added by the amendments. Reconsideration of the claims as amended is respectfully requested.

Section 103 Rejections

The Office Action rejected claims 1-8, 10-23 and 25-31 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Ahlers and found that claims 9 and 24 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the applicable base claim and any intervening claims. To expedite prosecution of the present application and without consideration of the merits of the claim rejections of the Office Action, Applicants have amended independent claims 1 and 21 to include all of the features of allowable claims 9 and 24. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that the claims as amended are not anticipated by Ahlers.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicant believes all claims now pending in this Application are in condition for allowance. The issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance at an early date is respectfully requested.

In the event that a fee or refund is due in connection with this Amendment, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any underpayment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No 19-0615. If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, please telephone the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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